

We Need Soul Winners
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Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much revenue comes by the strength of the ox.
Proverbs 14:4

In 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 Paul describes his efforts to bring the lost to Christ. He said that this involved becoming all things to all men and giving up liberties for the sake of others. The result was that he might save some. Paul used the term “win” to describe his efforts; he sought to win souls for God much as an athlete wins medals (crowns) for the one for whom he races.

What are “Soul Winners”? We use this term to describe people who convict others. They do this in speech and in deed – Colossians 3:17; they are ready with an answer – 1 Peter 3:15. They do this for the lost, but soul winning even applies to the saved, as Paul demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 9.

If being a soul winner is where our effort lies, what is the alternative? We might make up the term soul “losers” for people who drive others away from God as well as those who cannot hold their own hope. How can we tell between the two? Soul winners see the lost and grieve (Matthew 9:36) while Soul losers see the lost with contempt (Luke 18:10-14). Soul winners have hearts of gratitude (Mark 5:18-20), while Soul losers have an attitude of entitlement (Luke 12:17-19). Soul winners love to worship (Psalm 126), whereas Soul losers find the assembly a burden (Malachi 1:13). Finally, Soul winners labor for their own souls (1 Corinthians 9:23-27) while Soul losers are bitter and grumble (Jude 16).

Why is this so important? Because sometimes churches lose focus (Revelation 2:1-7). We become caught up on other purposes and then lose sight of overall goals. In other words, we become focused on purity and forget to win souls. Sometimes churches don’t WANT to win souls; winning souls means dealing with the difficulty of spiritual immaturity and helping new members to grow. This is evident when churches (and members) find more problems than solutions, are content to remain the same, and are unwilling to try new ideas.

There is a proverb which says “*Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much revenue comes by the strength of the ox*” (Proverbs 14:4). Many people want the church (the manger, the barn) to remain clean (without difficulties), but that can only be accomplished if there are no lost souls being brought into the church. Winning souls can be a dirty business, as the lost often bring with them baggage from sin. All churches must strive for doctrinal purity, but to pursue it at the cost of winning souls is wrong.

As a congregation we need to push to reach the lost. We need to help those gifted in this work and reinvigorate that desire within our body. As individual Christians we need to want to be soul winners. We need to want to engage the lost and accept the challenges with it.